

July 24 2020

# Noticias y Notas

News and notes from the Second Judicial District Court

## SJDC's first jury trial under COVID-19 protocols runs smoothly

History was made in Courtroom 338 of the Second Judicial District Court last week. The Hon. Cindy Leos presided over the court's first jury trial conducted under COVID-19 constraints.

"It went incredibly smoothly," Judge Leos said, attributing that outcome to the extensive advance preparation by the Second Judicial District Court staff.

"Everyone worked really hard to anticipate everything that might go wrong," Judge Leos said. "As a result, nothing went wrong." The judge wanted to give special recognition to the following individuals:

- ◆ Joy Wills, Supervising Attorney for the Criminal Division
- ◆ Blane Wamsley, Jury Division Manager
- ◆ Martin Davis, IT Director
- ◆ Faith Montoya, Judge Leos' Bailiff
- ◆ Paula Lucero, Judge Loveless' Bailiff

These staffers agreed that things went smoothly, though they admitted to some trepidation both before and during the trial.

Joy worked with the court's Purchasing and IT departments to rearrange the courtroom and procure materials to ensure that trials can be conducted properly without violating any COVID safety protocols.

Martin and multiple members of the IT team spent numerous hours in courtroom 338 installing and testing new computer and communications equipment.

Joy also organized a mock trial that included representatives from the District Attorney's and Public Defender's offices to test everything from jury selection procedures to methods for attorneys to have private conversations with their clients.

"Prior to the trial, I was very nervous about all of the various pieces coming together; there were so many new components that had to work out just right," Joy said. "I was also wondering, would jurors feel safe enough to show up? After the trial, I was proud of all of our court staff for all their hard work, grateful to the public for trusting us enough to come into the courthouse, and relieved that we had shown trials could safely be done, even under these unusual and difficult circumstances." **See trial, cont. . . on next page**



### Shout outs



**This is the space where we sound the horn for outstanding performances.**

This week's shout out goes to the entire **Jury Division**. These folks did the ground-work necessary to bring in jurors—and make them feel comfortable enough to serve on jurors in the midst of a pandemic. Without their work, last week's historic trial, and those that will happen for the foreseeable future, would not be possible. For that, we say, **GOOD JOB!**

**We need more news and notes. Share your stories by contacting us at:**  
[albdxh@nmcourt.gov](mailto:albdxh@nmcourt.gov)

### ***Trial cont. . .***

Blane and Faith also helped jurors feel comfortable as they moved around the courthouse both during jury selection and the trial.

“I thought being a bailiff on the first trial during a pandemic was going to be a lot of extra work,” Faith said. “I’m not saying it was easy, but it went very well. I have to say teamwork made that happen, and I really want to thank Paula Lucero, Judge Loveless’ bailiff for helping me on this first trial.”



**Courtrooms have been reconfigured to accommodate social distancing.**

Blane said the biggest challenge was “having to think through every detail, moment by moment, to ensure we didn’t do anything to compromise safety. That made this a very labor intensive process, but I think we have found ways that we can streamline things for future trials.”

Judge Leos agreed that that strict adherence to safety measures caused things to take a bit longer than usual, but in the end it “was a typical trial.” The proof of that, she said, was the 10 to 11 hours the jurors deliberated before reaching a verdict. “They took their responsibility very seriously, and the pandemic had no impact on their deliberations,” she said.

She also said this experience proved that the Second Judicial District Court is “an incredible organization that has risen to the occasion under difficult circumstances—and I am extremely proud to be working here.”

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## **Wondering about the court’s latest COVID-19 policies?**

The Administrative Office of the Courts regularly posts the latest information on policies we have to follow related to COVID-19 on the Judiciary’s internal employee website. Copy and paste the web address below to reach that page. If you are teleworking, you must first log in to the remote desktop.

<https://cms.nmcourts.gov/intranet/coronavirus-covid-19-information.aspx>

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### ***Identify the graduate***

We received a lot of correct responses for the last week’s graduate: Judge Brett Loveless. The first correct answer came from Gloria Cota with the Judicial Supervision and Diversion Program. Gloria, [Janet Van Why](#) in HR has your prize. This week’s graduate photo is [posted here](#). Good luck, everyone.

